



**OPEN USFS CAMPGROUNDS:** Teal, Cimarrona and Palisades Horse campgrounds north of Williams Creek Reservoir, Bridge Campground to the south. **NOTICE:** Camping along Williams Creek Road is prohibited within one-quarter mile of the road, except in two posted sites.

## Williams Creek Campground Closed for 2012 Season

**WILLIAMS CREEK CAMPGROUND** on the San Juan National Forest Pagosa Ranger District will be closed this season due to safety hazards associated with an extensive and ongoing tree disease outbreak.



Trees are falling into campsites.

The danger is that trees, which otherwise appear alive and healthy, can fall without warning. Despite ongoing efforts to remove diseased trees, USFS monitoring has revealed that hundreds of the remaining spruce trees in Williams Creek Campground may be infected and require removal to make the campground safe for occupancy. USFS crews will be working in the campground this spring through fall, and public entry into the area will be prohibited. Managers are hopeful that a portion of the campground can be reopened by next summer.

***For information, call the Pagosa Ranger District, 970 264-2268.***

Trees that appear live and green can fall without warning.



Roads are blocked by fallen trees.

See page 2 for more information.

## More Information

### BACKGROUND

Over the past decade, the Forest Service has monitored and treated an aggressive outbreak of a tree disease in the campground called *Armillaria*, which spreads between trees via their root systems, resulting in decay of the roots.

Trees (predominantly spruce) that otherwise appear healthy, when affected by *Armillaria*, can fall suddenly and without warning once enough of their root system has been compromised. This presents a significant potential hazard to visitors. The only effective treatment is removal of affected trees and those immediately adjacent.

Despite extensive efforts to combat the spread of this disease in Williams (including the removal of more than

400 trees), the disease is believed to have spread to more than 90% of the campground's spruce trees, rendering the majority unsafe for public use.

Consequently, the Forest Service has closed the entire facility until the affected trees are removed and subsequent surveys determine the remaining trees are healthy and do not pose hazards.

Crews will be felling and removing trees in the campground spring through fall. Public entry into the area will be prohibited through a Supervisor's Order.

Managers are hopeful that, by next summer, a portion of the campground can be reopened; other sections of the campground with denser stands of spruce may be closed longer.

## Questions and Answers

### Why must the campground be closed?

Trees that otherwise appear healthy are falling without warning, a situation which could put campers at great risk of injury and/or property loss.

### How does this forest health issue pose a danger?

Disease is widespread throughout the campground and will result in sudden failures of trees until all affected trees are removed.

### Where else can I camp?

There are four developed campgrounds in the area and two designated dispersed campsites. Camping outside of developed campgrounds is prohibited within ¼ mile of Williams Creek Road, except in the two posted sites.

### Are other places where people camp affected?

*Armillaria* is common throughout the forest, but only rarely creates such an extensive problem in developed recreation sites.

### What caused the problem?

*Armillaria* is natural in the forest and generally does not require treatment; however, when it occurs in developed campgrounds, treatment is mandatory due to the risk it presents. The only effective treatment is the identification and removal of affected trees.

### Why didn't the USFS notify the public sooner?

The public was notified as soon as it was determined that the spread of the disease had reached critical levels and that the campground needed closing as a result.

### How long will the campground remain closed?

The USFS will likely be able to open some loops in the campground next summer. Other sections of the campground with denser stands of spruce may require several years to effectively treat and mitigate for safety concerns.

### What will allow the campground to be reopened?

Affected trees must be felled and removed from the site. Following this, remaining trees must be evaluated to determine their wind-firmness (structural integrity).

### Is there a possibility that other campgrounds will be closed for the same reasons?

*Armillaria* is present in other campgrounds, but to a lesser extent than in Williams. There are no plans to close other campgrounds at this time.

### Will I be safe in other campgrounds?

The Forest Service conducts annual hazard tree surveys in all campgrounds, and suspect trees are removed as necessary. However, camping in forested environs always entails some measure of risk.

### Can I camp outside campgrounds in the area with a tent, vehicle, RV, horses, etc?

Dispersed camping outside of developed campgrounds is prohibited within ¼ mile of Williams Creek Road, except in two designated dispersed sites. Dispersed camping is permitted in most other areas on the District.